

# MADISON COUNTY COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

JULY / AUGUST 2008

by Steve DiGiovanna Communications / DES2

“Self-pity is easily the most destructive of all non-pharmaceutical narcotics: it is highly addictive, gives immediate and momentary pleasure - redirects responsibility and separates the owner from reality - and it is easily manufactured”

## 2 New Communication

### Officers Hired

Amanda Petersen was hired as a Communication Officer and began basic training on May 27th.

Amanda recently moved to Virginia City from the state of Michigan.

Prior to working at the Sheriff's Office, Amanda worked for Northern Energy in Ennis.

Linda Fels started training on July 11th and resides in Sheridan. Linda had worked at the JC Penny's in Butte before beginning her training at the Sheriff's Office.

Linda is scheduled to complete her initial training in late August.

The Communication Department and the Madison County Sheriff's Office are glad to have these two quality individuals on board.

With the addition of Amanda and Linda, the Communication Office personnel now total 9 qualified dispatchers.

## July 3rd & 4th: A Very Busy Time in the Communication Center

July 3rd and 4th lived up to their reputation as being a couple of the busier days of the year for the Sheriff's Office Communication Center. with 22 law enforcement and emergency units on the radio helped keep the Comm Center very active for a second consecutive night.

On July 3rd, Comm Officer Junie Miles had more than 18 law enforcement and emergency units on the radio dispatch board - at one time. During the fireworks show in VC, the Comm Center phones lit up with dozens of 911 calls reporting several fires near Ennis lake. MVRFD units handled the grass fires.

Later in the evening, a fairly strong thunderstorm developed over the county. Shortly thereafter, a 3 Deputy foot patrol in Virginia City was dispatched to a bar fight at the Pioneer Bar.

The thunderstorm produced numerous lightning strikes. Two fires erupted on opposite ends of the county (Rochester Basin and Norris Hill). Several arrests were made in the Pioneer Bar following the fight.

The fires, and a variety of law enforcement calls kept Junie's evening on the console - non-stop. The subjects were taken into custody, walked to the Sheriff's Office and booked accordingly.

On July 4th, multiple fire-work related fires in the Madison Valley - coupled The Comm Center slowed down after 2 AM and the Center was able to return to normal staffing levels.



Amy Williams, from Anderson Engineering, sets up equipment to get a site reading for the projected VC Pass Communication Tower slated for construction in Madison County. The site overlooks the Madison and Ruby Valley - between Ennis and V.C. - and is located near the FAA tower off of Mt Hwy 287 at the VC Pass

### VC Pass

#### Tower Update

The Virginia City Pass IM (Interoperability Montana) Tower is currently in the NEPA phase (environmental protection impact study).

The \$400,000 microwave tower, originally scheduled to be built this year, looks as though it will be started in the spring of '09.

Governmental red tape, Federal NEPA requirements and processing delays have helped push the start date back to 2009.

The "construction weather window" is rapidly closing and the project cannot be built through the winter months due to location and accessibility issues.



**Moriah Motel - Hail Damage**

## **Madison County Emergency Responders Tested by Vicious Storm**

By Steve DiGiovanna DES 2

A vicious summer storm lashed parts of Madison County Tuesday evening July 22. The hardest hit communities appeared to be the Sheridan and Ennis area. The slow moving series of thunderstorms rumbled across the county, finally ending their path of destruction about 7 PM.

The County Communication Center was initially warned of the storm by the National Weather Service at approximately 4:30 PM. Comm Officers immediately paged out the information over the first responder radio system and within minutes the 911 calls began pouring in.

Hail the size of quarters and larger raked the county causing widespread damage to crops, vehicles and structures. Many homes and businesses in the Sheridan area suffered siding damage, broken windows and denuded trees and bushes. Some minor flooding occurred at the height of the storm.

The Communication Center was swamped with dozens of reports of lightning strikes, fires in the Potosi area, damage to property in the Ennis area and a vehicle accident on Hwy 84 in the Beartrap.

County officials established two different Command Posts, one in the Ruby Valley at the Hospital in Sheridan and the second in the Madison Valley at the Ennis Fire Station. Sheridan Command was coordinated by Chris Mumme and Madison Command was coordinated by Steve Orr.



**Tree Snapped in Sheridan**

## **“TRIGGER POINT STAFFING”**

### **Beginning Soon in the Communication Center**

The Communication Department and the Sheriff’s Office have jointly developed a new plan to increase the staffing in the Communication Center.

The plan will allow for additional staffing in the Comm Center when certain “trigger point” conditions are met or expected.

Though nobody can predict emergency events, we can with an acceptable degree of accuracy, predict when the busiest times are most likely to occur in the Communication Center. A brief and partial description of the 7 triggering parameters include:

- 1. More than 4 full time MCSO Deputies scheduled for duty.**
- 2. Special Enforcement Operations requiring additional communication operations from the Comm Center.**
- 3. Pre-Scheduled, Large Scale Sporting Events / Parades / Concerts / Public Gatherings etc.**
- 4. Red Flag Days - with active fires in or near the county.**
- 5. On-going, significant, multi-operational period events.**
- 6. Severe Storm Predictions / Alerts.**
- 7. Any Friday / Saturday / Pre-Holiday evening when the temperature is 90 degrees or more at 1600 hrs.**

The county cannot justify, either operationally or fiscally, the addition of a second communication officer on a daily basis.

Both the Sheriff’s Office and the Communication Department recognize the need to address the public safety and officer safety concerns, particularly when the dispatcher becomes overwhelmed due to near impossible multi-tasking requests and requirements.

Generally, a second dispatcher doesn’t just double the capabilities in the Comm Center, but can exponentially increase the efficiency in the office during critical, multi-tasking intensive events.

A expected result would be additional first responder communication service, an increase in officer safety and information service - as well as a huge increase in overall Communication Center efficiency.

The new concept will be evaluated and future adjustments will be addressed as necessary. This process is an attempt to address staffing and efficiency concerns in dispatch - in a cost effective, proactive manner - and in a manner that also addresses concerns for officer safety and first responder communication needs.

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**“People seem not to see that their opinions and the manner in which delivered, are also a direct confession of their character.”**